



November 18, 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian,

We are writing to inform you of the strong possibility of an immediate system-wide, and in our view, illegal, strike by our bus drivers' union—local 1181—that could impact yellow bus service for more than 152,000 students citywide.

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) is issuing a bid to secure new yellow bus contracts to transport special education pre-kindergarten and early intervention (“pre-school”) children to their school programs for the 2012-2013 school year. Our current contracts are set to expire at the end of June 2012 and it is imperative that we move forward now to secure a new contract.

The bus drivers' union has told us that if the bid does not include an Employee Protection Provision—a measure which guarantees their workers civil service-type seniority rights in the event that their current employers do not win the new bid—they will go on strike, system-wide. This would result in severe disruptions, or possibly complete discontinuance, of yellow bus service.

In our view, this would be an illegal strike, and it is all the more unconscionable when you consider that New York State's highest Court recently ruled that we may not include an Employee Protection Provision requirement in our bids. Because the union has told us they will strike, we are immediately filing an unfair labor practice charge with the National Labor Relations Board and asking that it seek an injunction in federal court as quickly as possible.

We are deeply concerned about the impact of a strike on our students and families and we want you to be prepared in the event one occurs.

Any information we have about disruptions to bus service will be posted our website at <http://schools.nyc.gov>. We urge parents and guardians whose children rely on yellow bus service—for pre-K or K-12 service—to regularly check the website for updates. The information will also be provided to the media and to 311.

In the event that a strike occurs, the following protocols will take effect *for families of students who currently receive yellow bus service*.

- For all students who currently receive yellow bus service from a designated *school bus stop* to school, we will be issuing Metrocards. Metrocards are being made available at schools and should be requested through the school's general office. We have already informed the Transit Authority that it may need to accommodate additional riders. We also ask families to consider alternative means of transportation to school in case of a disruption.

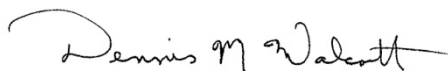
- Parents of pre-school and school-age children with IEPs requiring transportation from *their home* directly to their school, as well as parents of children in grades K-2, may request a Metrocard for the parent or guardian to act as the child's escort to school.
- For pre-school and school-age children who *have an IEP requiring transportation from their home* directly to their school, we are offering reimbursement for actual transportation costs. Parents who drive their children to school will be reimbursed at a rate of 51 cents per mile. Parents who use a taxi or car service to transport their child to school will be reimbursed for the trip upon completion of reimbursement forms that include a receipt for provided services. Requests for reimbursements should be made one week at a time on forms that will be provided in schools' general offices. The forms will ask you to indicate on which school days alternative transportation was taken and whether it was taken for both the morning and afternoon commute. Reimbursement forms as well as receipts should be sent to the Transportation Reimbursement Unit at 44-36 Vernon Blvd, Long Island City, NY 11101.
- Field trips using yellow bus service will be cancelled if there is a bus service disruption. After school programs will remain open, but no busing will be provided.

This is a very difficult situation for the school system and we understand that it may be very upsetting to our students and families. Every parent or guardian must evaluate the needs of his or her child in terms of making the best arrangements to transport the child to school. Students who arrive to school late because of disruptions to yellow bus service will be excused for up to 2 hours. Children who are unable to attend school because of disruptions to yellow bus service will be marked absent with an explanation code that will ensure their attendance record is not negatively impacted.

We regret the possibility of what could be a major disturbance in the lives of students and their families. We continue to hope that the bus driver and escort union will not take such unwarranted action in response to what is the proper, legal course of action for the Department of Education to take on behalf of our students and the City taxpayers.

If you have further questions about this matter, please call our Pupil Transportation Hotline at 718-392-8855 or 311.

Sincerely,



Dennis M. Walcott
Chancellor